

# **DRAFT**

# **Gist Ranch & Midvale**

# **Conservation Areas**

## **Ten Year Area Management Plan**

### **FY 2015-2024**



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## OVERVIEW

| Area Name     | Area Number | Year Acquired | Acreage | County | Administrative Responsibility | Maintenance Responsibility |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------|--------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gist Ranch CA | 9729        | 1997          | 11,240  | Texas  | Forestry                      | Forestry                   |
| Midvale CA    | 4613        | 1946          | 80      | Texas  | Forestry                      | Forestry                   |

### Statements of Purpose:

#### A. Strategic Direction

The primary purpose of acquiring the Gist Ranch and Midvale Conservation Areas (CAs) was to protect the upper portion of the Jack's Fork River watershed and create a public multi-use outdoor recreation area. The Midvale tract was originally used for a tower site. The Gist Ranch and Midvale CAs will continue to be developed and managed for the protection and enhancement of the area's natural resources and outdoor recreation. Effort will be made to trade the Midvale CA for land adjacent to Gist Ranch.

#### B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Gist Ranch and Midvale CAs is a woodland/forest landscape with glades.

#### C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

### I. Special Considerations

| Area Name     | Priority Area  | Natural Areas |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| Gist Ranch CA | Gist Ranch Savanna Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), Priority Forest Landscape, The Nature Conservancy Portfolio Site | None          |
| Midvale CA    | Gist Ranch Savanna COA, The Nature Conservancy Portfolio Site  | None          |

### II. Important Natural Features and Resources

| Area Name     | Species of Conservation Concern | Caves            | Springs |
|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Gist Ranch CA | Yes <sup>1</sup>                | Yes <sup>2</sup> | None    |
| Midvale CA    | No                              | No               | None    |

<sup>1</sup>Species of conservation concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.

<sup>2</sup>Records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) Natural History Biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the Department's *Resource Policy Manual*. All caves on this and other conservation areas are closed or restricted to public access. The fungus that causes white-nose syndrome in bats has been documented in Missouri, resulting in the Department's *White-nose Syndrome Action Plan* that limits public access for the protection of bats.

### III. Existing Infrastructure

| Area          | Parking Lots    | Roads                            | Privy          | Ponds                                   | Camping Areas  | Other  |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---|----------------|--|
| Gist Ranch CA | 14 <sup>1</sup> | 8.7 mi improved, 57.3 unimproved | 1 <sup>1</sup> | 25 fishless, 2 fishing (1.5, 3.5 acres) | 4 <sup>2</sup> | Summersville Fire Tower (87ft), hunting blinds <sup>1</sup> , unmanned firing (25, 50, 100, 300 yard) and shotgun range <sup>1</sup> , 16 target walkthrough archery range |
| Midvale CA    | 1               | None                             | None           | None                                    | None           | None   |

<sup>1</sup>American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible

<sup>2</sup>Fire rings at each; no other amenities

### IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

| Area          | Deed Restrictions | Federal Interest | Easements  | Cultural Resources | Hazards | Endangered Species | Boundary Issues  | Other            |
|---------------|-------------------|------------------|--|--------------------|---------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Gist Ranch CA | None              | Yes <sup>1</sup> | power line (~2 mi), Smith Flooring property <sup>2</sup> | Yes <sup>3</sup>   | None    | None               | Yes <sup>4</sup> | Yes <sup>5</sup> |
| Midvale CA    | None              | Yes <sup>1</sup> | power line (~0.3 mi), private property (~0.1 mi),        | No known           | None    | None               | No               | none             |

<sup>1</sup>Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.

<sup>2</sup>The Department shares an easement (2.6 miles) on Smith Flooring property along the southeast property line.

<sup>3</sup>The Summersville Fire Tower located on Gist Ranch is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Place and may, therefore, be considered historic. Records on

cultural resources are kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department *Resource Policy Manual*.

<sup>4</sup>Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this property.

<sup>5</sup>A portion of road located in T29N, R8W Section 16 needs to be re-routed around approximately 0.25 miles of private property that the current road passes through.

## MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Monitor and control invasive species.
- 2) Improve and restore forests, woodlands, glades, old fields and food plots.

**Management Objective 1:** Monitor and control invasive species.

**Strategy 1:** Conduct continuous monitoring of all invasive species. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Control invasive species using the latest and successful methods that may include the use of chemicals, prescribed fire and mechanical methods. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 2:** Improve and restore forests, woodlands, glades, old fields and food plots.

**Strategy 1:** Identify natural communities and opportunities for specific management through scheduled forest compartment inventories. Management practices may include, but are not limited to, timber harvest, timber stand improvement and prescribed fire. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Actively seek locations and install additional green browse food plots throughout Gist Ranch CA for wildlife habitat balance and to increase areas for ideal hunting opportunities. (Forestry)

### VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

#### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Investigate the possibility of developing a minimum 20-acre lake capable of sustaining a year-round fishery by Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.
- 2) Maintain riparian buffers on Peters Creek (2.75 miles), Sanders Branch (2.5 miles) and Padalong Creek (2.1 miles).
- 3) Maintain current put-and-take fisheries (1.5- and 3.5-acre fishing lakes).

**Management Objective 1:** Develop a large fishing lake.

**Strategy 1:** Work with Design and Development to complete engineer reports, site selection, perk tests and feasibility of a minimum 20-acre lake by FY16. (Forestry, Fisheries, Design and Development)

**Management Objective 2:** Maintain riparian buffers.

**Strategy 1:** Minimize sedimentation to the creeks, tributaries, lakes and fens by following the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice* guidelines (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014). (Forestry)

**Management Objective 3:** Maintain current put-and-take fisheries.

**Strategy 1:** Stock channel catfish annually. (Fisheries)

**Strategy 2:** Manage aquatic vegetation at levels beneficial to fish populations and that will accommodate shoreline fishing opportunities. (Forestry)

**VII. Public Use Management Considerations**

**Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Encourage and increase outdoor recreational use and opportunities.
- 2) Enforce the Wildlife Code and other State Statutes.
- 3) Assess opportunities to increase or restrict access to parts of Gist Ranch CA.
- 4) Maintain management goals while supporting public demands.

**Management Objective 1: Encourage and increase recreational use on the area.**

**Strategy 1:** Install a large lake (>20 acres) for fishing opportunities. (Forestry, Fisheries, Design and Development)

**Strategy 2:** Investigate the need and possibility of constructing a small pavilion at the existing firearms shooting range. (Forestry)

**Strategy 3:** Investigate the need and possibility of developing gravel boat ramps at both existing fishing lakes and expanding the existing parking lots at these lakes. (Forestry, Fisheries, Design and Development)

**Management Objective 2:** Enforce the Wildlife Code and other state statutes.

**Strategy 1:** Determine areas of illegal activity and initiate routine and/or group patrols to address these problems as they arise. (Forestry and Protection)

**Strategy 2:** Initiate proactive law enforcement measures to eliminate potential areas of regulation and/or state law violations. (Forestry and Protection)

**Strategy 3:** Improve, maintain, or develop natural barriers between roadways and food plot/field areas to curtail road hunting activities. (Forestry and Protection)

**Management Objective 3:** Assess opportunities to increase or restrict access to parts of Gist Ranch CA.

**Strategy 1:** Identify sensitive areas, such as, fens, creek crossings and glades to avoid unnecessary disturbance from vehicular traffic. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Investigate the possibility of improving select roads. In the meantime, continue to brush-out and maintain roads utilizing mechanical and chemical methods to aid in safe vehicle access. (Forestry, Design and Development)

**Management Objective 4:** Maintain management goals while supporting public demands.

**Strategy 1:** Continue to inform the public concerning wildlife and forestry management practices conducted on Gist Ranch CA via media outlets and one-on-one contacts. (Forestry)

## **VIII. Administrative Considerations**

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- 1) Mark boundary lines.
- 2) Obtain easements.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain boundary lines.

**Strategy 1:** Continue to mark and post boundary lines using a strategic approach of every five years. (Forestry)

**Strategy 2:** Request boundary surveys as needed. (Forestry)

**Management Objective 2:** Obtain easements.

**Strategy 1:** Identify an alternate route for a road through the woods (that currently tracks through private property). (Forestry, Design and Development)

### **Lands Proposed for Acquisition or Disposal:**

- When available, adjacent properties may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered. (Forestry)
- The Midvale CA portion of the area may be considered for disposal to trade for land adjacent to Gist Ranch CA (i.e., properties that “square-up” the irregular boundary of Gist Ranch CA). Doing so will result in more efficient management and maintenance. (Forestry)



## APPENDICES

### **Area Background:**

Gist Ranch and Midvale Conservation Areas are located in southeast Texas County, approximately 5 miles west of Summersville and 14 miles east of Houston. The primary attraction to the areas includes deer and turkey hunting, firearms target shooting and fishing. The area is mostly forested with a large component of woodland and glade communities. Due to heavy logging in the early 1990s, tree size classes are comprised primarily of pole and small saw timber. Old logging roads can be found on nearly every ridge and hollow.

The Summersville Towersite is located in Gist Ranch CA. The tower is currently maintained and manned during high fire danger days by the Department.

The topography of the area is generally hilly with long, broad ridges dissected by steep hollows. Seventy-six percent of the area drains into tributaries of the North Prong of the Jack's Fork River. The remaining 24 percent, in the northeast portion of the area, has flat ridge tops with more gently sloping areas that drain into Spring Valley, and eventually into the Current River. Elevations range from 1,000 to 1,500 feet.

Gist Ranch CA was purchased in March 1997 from Smith Flooring Company in Mountain View, Missouri. The area is known locally as the Gist Ranch, the Kinnard Ranch and the Stoner Ranch. The area had several owners in the past, but always remained in one large block. At the time of the Department's purchase, extensive logging had recently occurred over the entire tract.

During the 1940s, the area was leased and used as a "game refuge" by the Department, not unlike more well-known conservation areas that were used to protect the last remaining populations of deer and turkey, such as Caney Mountain and Peck Ranch. According to records, the area was one of the few places where deer and turkey were still present in the state. At least one adjacent landowner found a sign indicating the area as a game refuge boundary.



**Current Land and Water Types: Gist Ranch CA**

| Land/Water Type             | Acres         | Feet   | % of Area  |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|------------|
| Woodland                    | 8,721         |        | 78.0       |
| Upland Forest               | 1,268         |        | 11.3       |
| Bottomland/ Riparian Forest | 780           |        | 7.0        |
| Glade                       | 387           |        | 3.4        |
| Old Fields/ Upland Fields   | 60            |        | <1         |
| Cropland/ Hay Land          | 15            |        | <1         |
| Impounded Water             | 5             |        | <1         |
| Warm-Season Grass Fields    | 4             |        | <1         |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>11,240</b> |        | <b>100</b> |
| Stream Frontage             |               | 37,000 |            |

**Current Land and Water Types: Midvale CA**

| Land/Water Type | Acres     | Feet | % of Area  |
|-----------------|-----------|------|------------|
| Upland Forest   | 80        |      | 100        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>80</b> |      | <b>100</b> |
| Stream Frontage |           | 0    |            |

**References:**

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri watershed protection practice: 2014 Management guidelines for maintaining forested watersheds to protect streams*. Jefferson City, Missouri: The Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Nigh, T.A. et al. (December 2010 draft). *Ecological land types of Missouri: The interior Ozarks*.

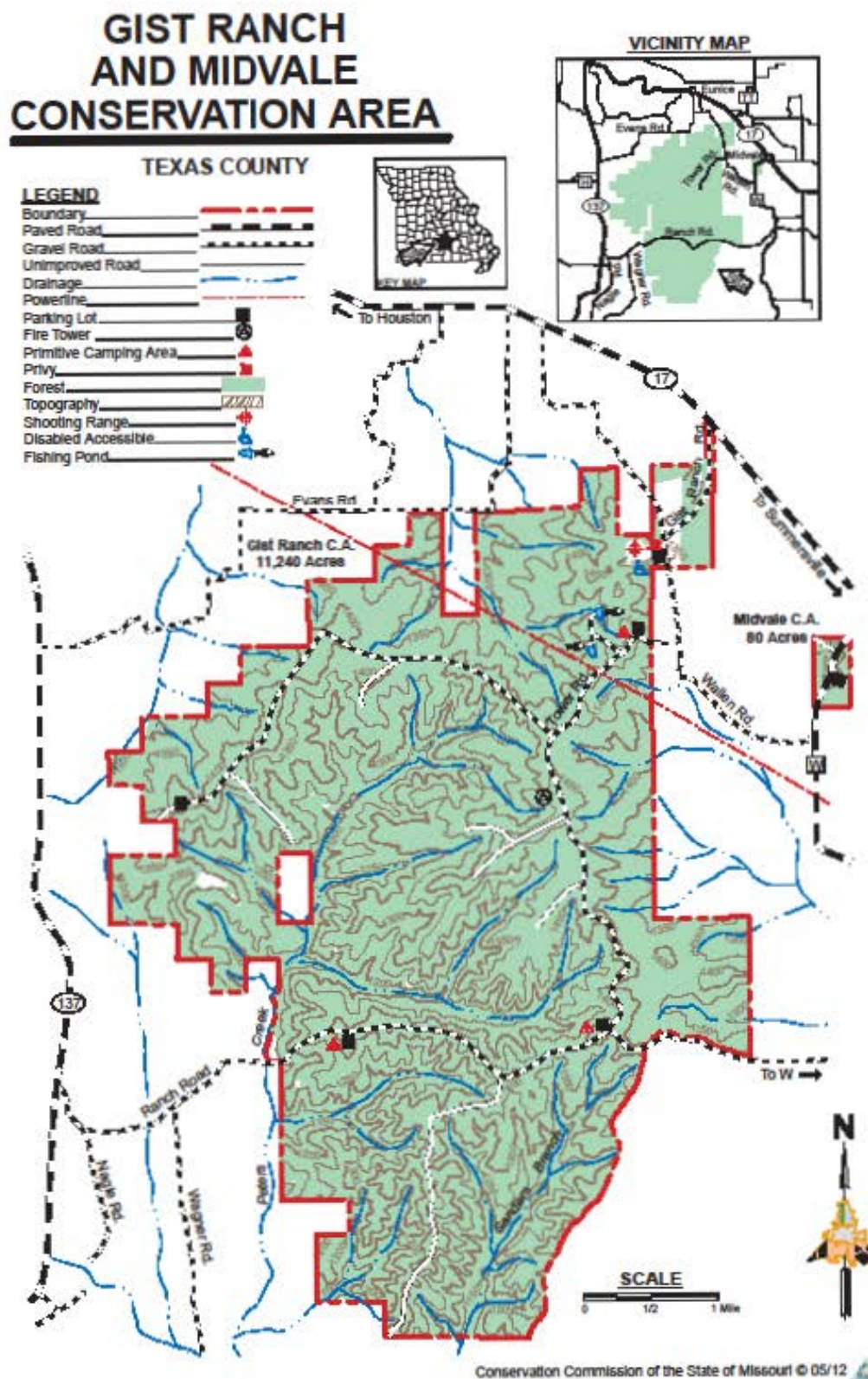
**Maps:**

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

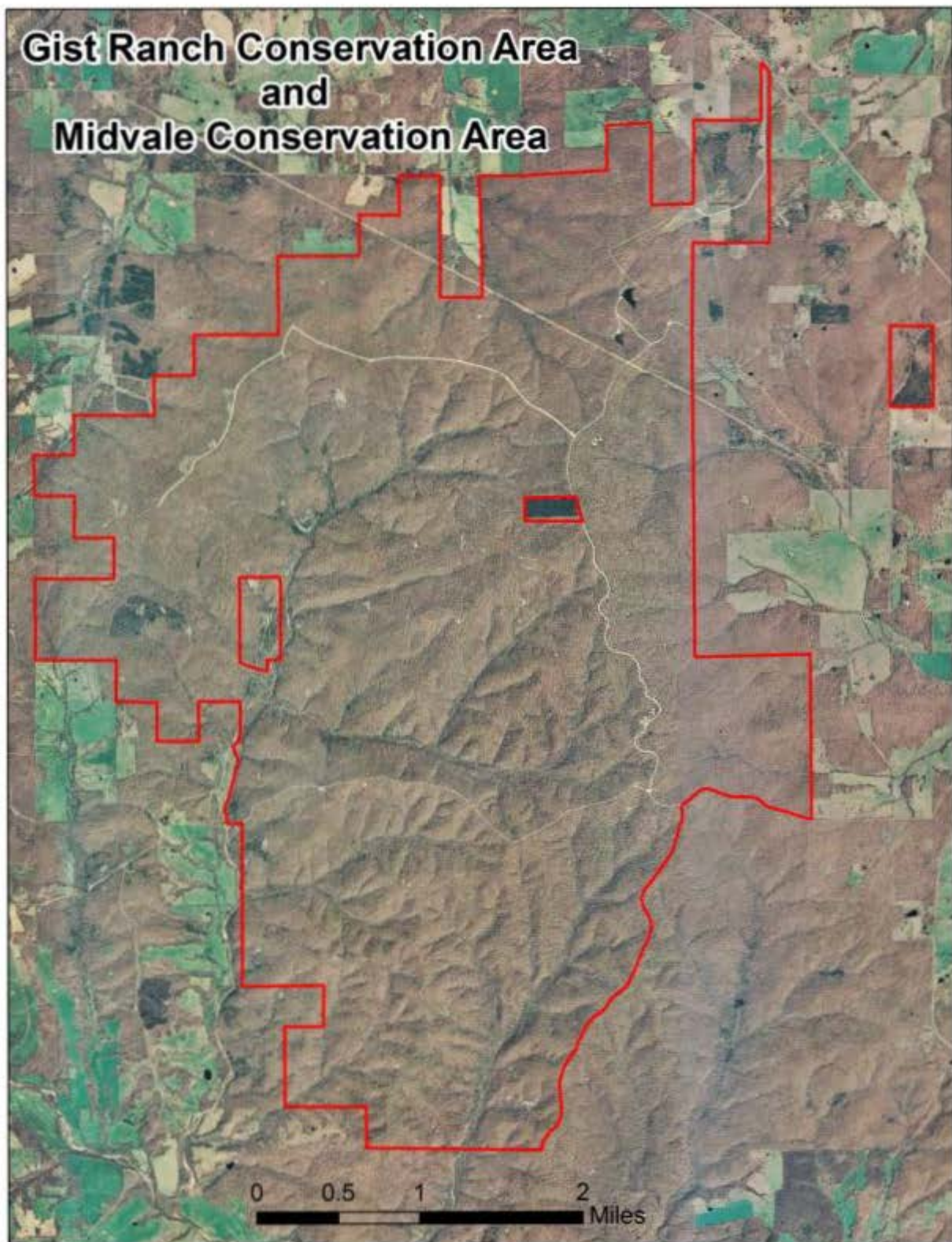
Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 1: Area Map



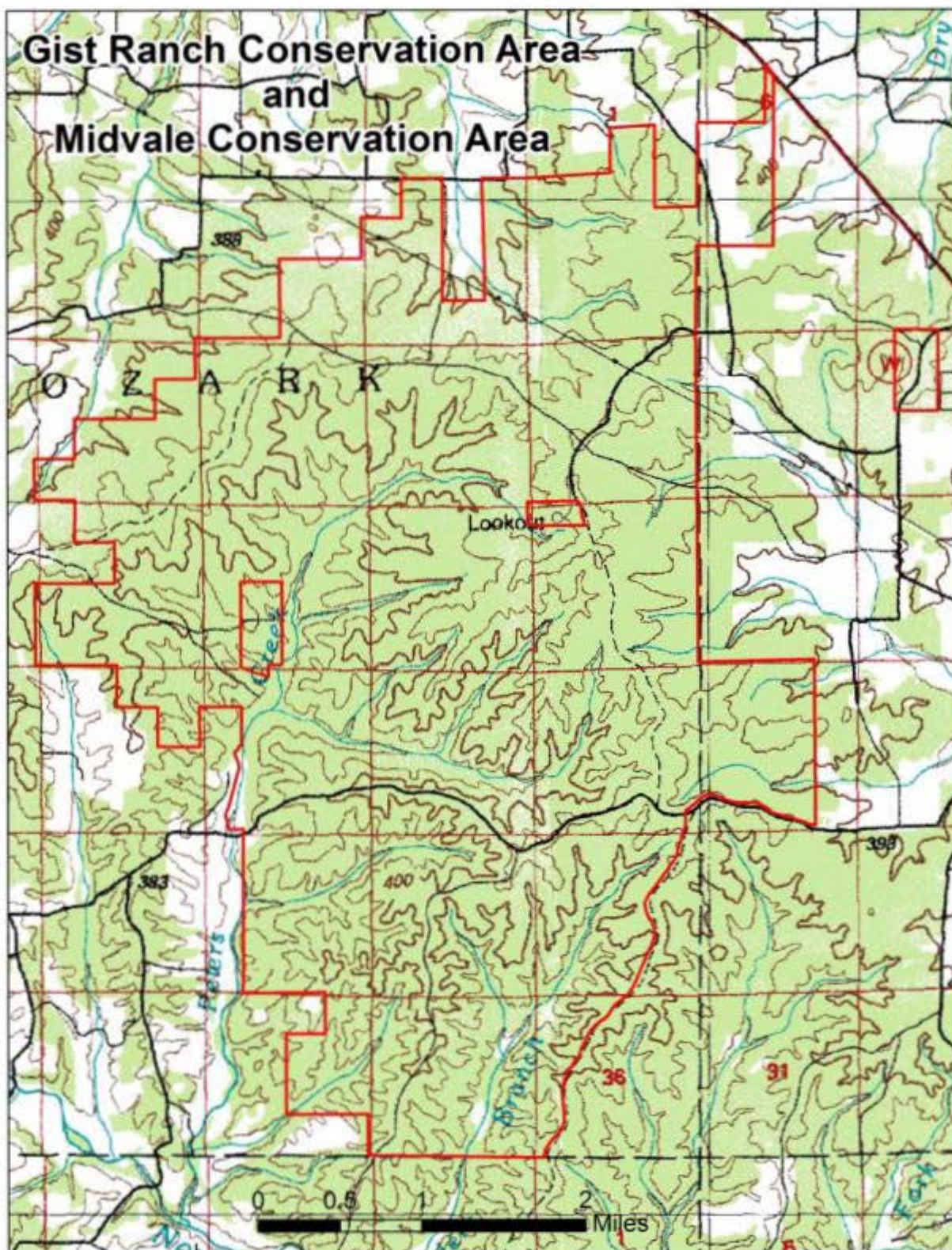


**Figure 2: Aerial Map**





**Figure 3: Topographic Map**



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